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Personal Report



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Home university: The German University
in Cairo (GUC)

Host University: Duale Hochschule Baden-
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(DHBW-Stuttgart)

Field of study: Digital Media Engineering
Degree intended: Bachelor Thesis Project

Number of semesters: 1 semester

Period of time: 6 months

Coming to Stuttgart was a wish that I hoped when selecting my bachelor thesis projects' priorities, and when I was chosen in order to travel to Stuttgart, Germany, I was very happy and excited at the same time. The funny thing is that my bachelor topic that I choose was the first topic in a list of over 50 bachelor projects, but the topic of recognizing emotions grabbed my attention and I had this feeling that I want to work on this topic badly.

I want to begin my personal experience from the moment that I contacted the German embassy at Cairo in order to come to Germany, they told me that I need an invitation letter from the host university in Germany (DHBW) and to open a bank account at Germany because at this part I didn't have a scholarship yet, and finally a health insurance covering the period that I will stay in Germany. And I have to mention here that without Mr. Sabry from the GUC, I would have taken a much longer time in the VISA procedures and specially when opening a bank account at Germany. The procedures of opening a bank account takes from 3 to 4 weeks from the moment you send the required forms to the German bank. Concerning the invitation letter from the DHBW, it was sent to us from Prof. Reichardt (our supervisor) easily and without any problem. And finally concerning the health insurance then you can go to any health insurance company that is originated in Europe and make a one in 5 minutes.

So after you get the invitation letter and your bank account is opened successfully, then now you are ready to book an appointment so as to get a VISA. But I must tell you a small hint here, that these past procedures take about 3 to 4 weeks (the invitation letter takes no time), so you can book the appointment of the VISA 3 to 4 weeks early because you are never sure that you will find a good appointment when you finish the requirements of the VISA. So for example if now is the 1st of January and you started doing the procedures of the VISA then take an appointment at the 1st of February because it is very hard to get an appointment at the 1st of February if you booked it on the 28th of January for example, and if anything went wrong and you didn't finish your VISA requirements then you are able to postpone your appointment if you called the embassy 2 days earlier. So at this point if you gave them all of the requirements they need and did the appointment

then it will take you about 4-7 weeks in order to have your VISA and travel (they will tell you 7 weeks but it took me 4 weeks only).

So the whole period of issuing a VISA will take from 1.5 month to 2 months. So if you are going to travel on the 1st of March then you'd better start at the 1st of January or earlier if possible to be on the safe side.

Please note that I am talking about doing a VISA for more than 3 months here, but If you are staying less than that, then you can do a tourist VISA which is much more easier than this one.

During the procedures of doing the VISA, I was also searching for accommodation to stay at while my staying here and I visited so many websites but the bad things about most of the ads in the websites is that they are in German (use Google translate at this part) and they needs you to check the room before you move in, so this is a bad thing because you are not in Germany yet, another bad thing is that this ad may be fake and the publisher may want to steal the money from you by transferring the money before you moves in, so be CAREFUL in this step because this happens.

Unfortunately, I began my looking for the accommodations late (1.5 month before I travel) and as a result I couldn't find a good offer, so I was forced to accept an offer from the GUC office at Stuttgart by the studentenwerk that made us pay a full semester (6 months) in advance and before we come to Germany, even if we are not going to stay the 6 months. So you'd better look for offers before you travel with a sufficient time (3 months is good). And another recommendation is to look at the studentenwerk accommodations because they are safe in the matter of transferring money and getting robbed.

There is some stuff that you need to bring with you at the very first days in your stay in Germany like an internet cable because most of the dorms here is not supporting Wi-Fi and only supporting internet through cables so bring your cable with you. You should also bring a reasonable amount of money because your bank account won't be activated before at least one week after your coming, so you can bring 500 euros to be on the safe side,

because this amount of money can support you the first month of your stay if something went wrong with the bank account. You should also bring your personal tools like cups, plates, dishes, bed sheet and pillow, if they are not supported by the dorm. And don't forget a camera to record your experience here 😊

After I finished everything I needed to do before I travel to Germany then it's time to talk about things I experienced from the moment I came to Germany. First thing if you are travelling to any city rather than Munich or Frankfurt or Berlin then it is very hard to find an Egypt air flight that is directly go to this city. But don't worry, you are having now 2 options, whether to come with a German airline (like Lufthansa) or to go to a main city and then take a train that goes to this city. Please note that Germany has a very good transportation system.

And from this point I need to mention some stuff that I liked in Germany, and the first thing that I liked in Germany was their transportation system; this system is punctual and can gets you anywhere in Germany and very reliable to use, and if you were in a group then it will be cheap also.

The system of everything here is also perfect, so if you are not getting used to system then you will be forced to start doing that.

The holidays here are holidays so you can't call anyone to ask him about something for work unless it was VERY important.

You can travel to anywhere in Germany even if you are 1 day before that. There are a lot of transportation techniques here in Germany starting from the German railway (www.bahn.de) and going through the carpooling (www.studentenwerk.de), carpooling mean that someone is having a free place in his car and he wants you to share the cost of the fuel with you and he can gets you to the place that you wants to go if it was on his path, and finally the cheap airlines like (<http://www.ryanair.com>) and this doesn't apply to Germany only but you can go to anywhere in Europe with the cheapest prices you can imagine (I went to Venice, Italy with 20 euros and yes it was going and return but take care where is the airport is located).

So back to our first times here in Germany, so when we came to Stuttgart the first persons to welcome us was Mrs. Agnieszka from the DHBW international office and Mrs. Tanja from the GUC office at Stuttgart and some Egyptian students as well, they told us about the available supermarkets that we can buy from and they helped us a lot.

There is a lot of paper work that we needed to do at the beginning of our stay, starting from the activation of the bank and registration at the foreign affairs office and insurance and a lot more but the international office here will help you a lot in that. For the daily transportation here you need either a semester ticket or a monthly ticket, depending on the duration of your stay here, but if you are going to stay more than 3 months then go for semester ticket (It was about 180 when I bought it).

Transportations in Stuttgart are very easy and fast and here are small hints about how to go to a place in Stuttgart (or in Deutschland in general). The easiest way is to download the DB-Bahn Application at your smart phone and just type the source and destination and it will get you the shortest and earliest way to go there. Another way is to read the timetable page at the station and see where it is heading to, so at every station you will find all of the buses or trains passing through this station with their timetables page, and these timetables will show you every station each train will pass through, and beside every station the train will pass you will find a number that is referring to the number of minutes that It will take from this station to go to that station, and finally at the bottom of the timetable page you will find the exact timings that this train will pass by.

You are encouraged to check the regions that are included in your semester/monthly ticket, as it can save you a lot of money. So for example if you want to go to Metzingen (outlet city) from Stuttgart, and you have a semester ticket or at week end with your university id, then all of what you have to pay is 3 euros to go and return from there, how?? By taking any train going to Bempflingen, this city is included in your semester ticket, and from there you can go and return with only 3 euros.

Working with my bachelor project, Emotion Recognition was always being a pleasure for me. I was always excited to develop this software more and more, and with the help with prof. Reichardt in guiding me through my work and warning me of things that won't work affected my work positively. I have to mention here the help of the international office of DHBW that helped me in a lot of things that would have decreased my rate of progress in my project. They supported us in a lot of things starting from offering us a scholarship that helped us a lot during our stay, and a Deutsch classes that improved our Deutsch level, and they guided us on how to improve our German language by going to a place called "Sprache café" where you can see people at your level of German and there is a native German speaker at the table that can guide you in talking, this place is also supporting another languages like French and Italian and English as well, and it is for free and it takes place twice a month.

The International office help didn't stop here but they also invited us to a meeting with the social work department that we can share our problems and progress and everything. They were very good meetings that I had a lot of fun at. I have to mention here that Mrs. Agnieszka from the international office was supporting us in every possible mean that she could when we had either work problems or personal problems.

When you first come here to Stuttgart you may find some things that you are not getting used to. For me one of the things that I was not used to in Egypt is the amount of Alcohols that is being used here in Germany, and the city here is closed starting from 7 or 8 o'clock, and the weather here was much colder than that we had in Egypt, and finally weekends here, because here the weekend days are Saturday and Sunday, but in Egypt it is Friday and Saturday. But I have to mention here that all of these stuff you will get used to in a month.

There are a lot of places that you can travel to while you are staying here in Germany. Of course if you are alone or in small group like 3 persons the carpooling will be much cheaper but if you were in a groups of 5 you may find it cheaper to go to some places inside Germany, and you must not forget the Schönes-Wochenende-Ticket that can be used only at

the weekends with 40 euros for 5 persons and can get you anywhere inside Germany with local transportation only.

So we can with the places that you can travel outside Stuttgart with train like Basel (Switzerland), Europa Park (A MUST GO), Füssen (Disney castle), Heidelberg, Munich, Oberstdorf (Ice Skiing at winter), Schaffhausen (Switzerland) and Ulm.



Skiing at Oberstdorf

There are also places that you can travel outside Germany but the train will be very expensive so you would better find a cheap airlines or carpooling or even a bus, and these places are like Brussels, Prague, Venice, Rome, Capri, Holland and finally Spain.



In front of the Atomic, Brussels

Last thing I want to add at traveling is the places that you can visit inside Stuttgart like the Mercedes museum, Porsche Museum, Ritter Sport factory, Teck castle, TV tower, the Zoo and of course all of the parks that are spread all over Stuttgart. Please note that all of these places you can go to with your semester ticket or university id with no money.



On the top of Teck castle

There are a lot of events that are getting place here in Stuttgart that you shouldn't miss, and you can check with the international office or at the tourist information offices about them. Some of the events that I went through and I had a lot of fun were the Stuttgarter Lauf Halbmarathon, festivals at the Markt Platz, festivals at the Schloss Platz and finally the spring festival at Bad Cannstatt.



Stuttgart Half Marathon

At the end of my personal report I would like to say that travelling and studying in Germany for one semester was the best experience I have had in my life until now and I gained a lot of fun and experience out of it. I highly recommend each person to have this experience at least once a life.

Marwan Akeel,
17 August 2012,
Stuttgart